

October 14, 2007

Kristen

Thank you for the time you and your team (I believe Matt, Nikki and Greg?) spent with me last Monday, October 8. I thought that both the tour and our exploratory conversation gave me a feel for how we could work together.

Here are some observations and thoughts based on my visit.

- From our discussion, I believe that we agree that the focus of any technology planning should be the students; that is, how technology can affect and enhance learning in the classroom. By extension this student-oriented focus would be useful as they pursue further education in a world dominated by technology.
- All stakeholders should be significantly involved including teachers, administration, other staff members, alumni, parents and especially students. Students should have a stake in what and how they learn, particularly with regard to using technology. Our students today have grown up with high levels of technology, while most adults have not. Another group that should be invited are the businesses that employ or are even owned by parents of students at University School. Developing such ties can be beneficial in many ways to both the students as well as to the school in general
- There is a need to create an Academic Vision for Technology Use at University School, one which stakeholders have ownership. This could be created either in a single large group meeting or developed using the results of several small group meetings (“focus” groups). Aspects of a vision (and mission and goals) would undoubtedly percolate up after several such conversations. Small informal groups using a consistent set of questions will encourage greater individual involvement and provide more opportunities to think about the future.
- A result of the “visioning” process should be some sort of technology plan. One possibility is three-year technology plan where the first year is very well-defined and succeeding years are less well-defined. At some point during the year (probably prior to budget needs), the current year would be evaluated to that point and the next year would be more clearly defined. At the end of the year, an additional year would be defined (to continue as a 3-year plan) and the current year evaluated. Other items in the initial version of the plan document might include:
 - an assessment of the current situation
 - the results of conversations of groups of staff members, groups of students, and other stakeholders using a common set of questions which would be provided prior to a meeting; questions would seek to ascertain the current situation and their view of future uses of technology at USM.
 - a set of prioritized goals
 - a plan to repurpose and replace technology on a regular basis
 - a method of evaluating the success of the plan each year
 - a plan for reviewing the plan near the end of the school year, evaluating the current year, modifying the next year (which will become the first of the next 3-year grouping) and adding a year onto the end

Finally, whatever you decide to do, there needs to be an agreed upon timeline for this process with particular benchmarks along the way to assure a useful product.

I’d be very interested in your team’s reaction to my observations.

Thank you for your time and congratulations on your efforts in using technology on behalf of your students.

Sincerely,

Joe Kmoch